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 RUSBTA/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 8862  
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 RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 7387  
 RUFGKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 5330  
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NEW DELHI FOR SENATE STAFFER GALBRAITH

CINCPAC FOR FPA

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
 TAGS: PGOV, OREP, ASEC, OTRA (GALBRAITH, PETER W.), BG  
 SUBJECT: PETER GALBRAITH'S CALLS ON THE TWO MAJOR  
 - OPPOSITION LEADERS

REF: (A) DHAKA 832, (B) DHAKA 607

1. (CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT).

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 SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION  
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2. PETER W. GALBRAITH, SENIOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER ON THE U.S. SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, AND POLCOUNS CALLED ON BANGLADESH NATIONAL PARTY LEADER BEGUM KHALEDA ZIA AND AWAMI LEAGUE PRESIDENT SHEIKH HASINA WAJED IN BACK-TO-BACK CALLS ON JANUARY 29. THE TWO LEADERS EACH REVIEWED THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION, INSISTING PRESIDENT ERSHAD MUST RESIGN BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE CAN HAPPEN. BOTH WILL CONTINUE TO OPPOSE THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 3. THE PERSONAL DISLIKE OF THE TWO WOMEN FOR EACH OTHER WAS EASILY DISCERNIBLE. OPPOSITION "UNITY" IS FOCUSED ON THE "ONE POINT" OF FORCING ERSHAD'S REMOVAL; BEYOND THAT, UNITY DOES NOT EXIST.

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 3. GALBRAITH ASKED EACH WOMAN WHAT THE U.S. COULD DO TO HELP IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. THE BNP RESPONSE WAS "BROWBEAT ERSHAD TO DO THE 'RIGHT' THING;" SHEIKH HASINA SAID "MAKE HIM RESIGN." BOTH WOMEN ALSO SAID THE POPULAR PERCEPTION IS THAT THE U.S. IS KEEPING ERSHAD IN POWER; BOTH BELIEVE THAT U.S. AID HELPS

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ERSHAD. GALBRAITH EXPLAINED TO EACH WOMAN THAT THE U.S. INTEREST IN BANGLADESH IS HUMANITARIAN, I.E., ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PEOPLE. THE U.S. IS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. HE TOLD EACH OF THEM THAT THE U.S. WOULD SUPPORT ANY GOVERNMENT ELECTED BY THE BANGLADESH PEOPLE IN A FAIR ELECTION. (SHEIKH HASINA HAD ASKED HIM IF THE U.S. WOULD SUPPORT AN AWAMI LEAGUE GOVERNMENT.)

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4. GALBRAITH WAS NOT IMPRESSED BY EITHER LEADER. NEITHER GAVE ANY INDICATION OF HAVING A PLAN TO GOVERN BANGLADESH, NOR OF HAVING THOUGHT BEYOND THE GOAL OF "ERSHAD'S REMOVAL." NEVERTHELESS, IN SPITE OF THE NON-PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS, IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT GALBRAITH CALL ON THE TWO WOMEN.

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5. FOLLOWING ARE REPORTS OF THE TWO MEETINGS. THEY WERE PREPARED AFTER GALBRAITH LEFT POST; HE HAS NOT SEEN THEM AT ALL. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

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BEGUM KHALEDA ZIA  
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6. GALBRAITH AND POLCOUNS CALLED ON BEGUM ZIA JANUARY 29. LT. COLONEL (RET'D) MOSTAFIZUR RAHMAN, MEMBER OF THE BNP STANDING COMMITTEE AND FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL WAS ALSO PRESENT. BEGUM ZIA REVIEWED THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION, SAYING THAT THE BNP WILL GO INTO ELECTIONS "AS SOON AS ERSHAD IS NOT THERE." ASKED IF HAVING PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THE SAME DAY WOULD BE A POSSIBLE WAY TO "HELP" THE SITUATION, COL. MOSTAFIZ SAID SUCH A STEP WAS "TOO LATE." GALBRAITH ASKED WHAT THE U.S. COULD DO TO HELP. COL. MOSTAFIZ SAID "BROWBEAT ERSHAD TO DO THE 'RIGHT' THING," WHILE BEGUM ZIA NODDED IN AGREEMENT. COL. MOSTAFIZ WENT ON TO SAY THAT ERSHAD CLAIMS HE IS POPULAR IN THE VILLAGES. THE BNP DOES NOT THINK HE IS; "LET HIM TEST HIS POPULARITY IN ELECTIONS." COL. MOSTAFIZ ADDED THAT "IT DOES NOT MATTER WHETHER THE BNP WINS ONE VOTE OR 100. IF IT IS A FAIR ELECTION, THE BNP WILL ACCEPT THE RESULT. C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 05 DHAKA 00875

NEW DELHI FOR SENATE STAFFER GALBRAITH

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7. BEGUM ZIA AND COL. MOSTAFIZ DISCUSSED ERSHAD'S CORRUPTION, REFERRING TO THE VAST SUMS OF MONEY HE, HIS WIFE, AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE AMASSED.

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8. GALBRAITH ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A "UNITED PARTY." BEGUM ZIA AND COL. MOSTAFIZ BOTH EMPHATICALLY SAID THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE TWO PARTIES (AWAMI LEAGUE AND BNP) ARE TOO DIFFERENT. THEY HAVE DIFFERENT GOALS, POLICIES, STRATEGIES, ETC. THERE IS A "UNITED MOVEMENT" TO REMOVE ERSHAD, BUT THAT IS ALL. GALBRAITH SAID ONE POSSIBILITY HE HAD HEARD DISCUSSED WAS, AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE, THE POSSIBILITY OF BEGUM ZIA RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT AND

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AWAMI LEAGUE LEADER SHEIKH HASINA WAJED FOR PRIME MINISTER. BEGUM ZIA REACTED VERY NEGATIVELY TO THIS, DENYING VEHEMENTLY THAT IT COULD HAPPEN, OR WOULD EVEN BE CONSIDERED.

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9. ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF MARTIAL LAW, COL. MOSTAFIZ SAID THAT IT WOULD BE "BAD." THE MILITARY MAY INITIALLY TALK ABOUT HOLDING IMMEDIATE ELECTIONS, BUT THERE IS NO GUARANTEE ELECTIONS WILL ACTUALLY BE HELD -- AND IT IS MOST LIKELY THEY WOULD NOT BE. BEGUM ZIA SEEMED MORE DISPOSED TO BE WILLING TO ACCEPT MARTIAL LAW "IF THE MILITARY IMMEDIATELY SCHEDULED ELECTIONS."

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10. GALBRAITH ASKED IF THE BNP HAD THE NAME OF A PERSON WHO COULD LEAD THE "NEUTRAL, CARETAKER GOVERNMENT" THE OPPOSITION WANTS. BEGUM ZIA SAID THAT "ANY OF THE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES," EXCEPT CHIEF JUSTICE ABDUL MUNIM WHO IS "ERSHAD'S MAN," WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE BNP. SHE SAID THE BNP AND THE AWAMI LEAGUE HAVE NOT AGREED ON A NAME ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH. (COMMENT: THE IMPRESSION SHE LEFT WAS THAT THE TWO PARTIES HAVE NOT DISCUSSED THE MATTER. END COMMENT.)

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11. BEGUM ZIA SAID THAT PEOPLE IN THE BNP AND IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE THINK THE U.S. IS RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING ERSHAD IN PLACE. GALBRAITH SAID THAT THE U.S. INTEREST IN BANGLADESH IS HUMANITARIAN, I.E., DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH. THE U.S. IS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. HE SAID THE U.S. WOULD SUPPORT ANY GOVERNMENT ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH IN A FAIR ELECTION.

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12. GALBRAITH ASKED IF BEGUM ZIA HAD ANY PLANS TO VISIT THE U.S. SHE SAID SHE WOULD LIKE TO GO. THE BNP HAS "MANY FRIENDS" THERE, AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP PEOPLE IN THE U.S. INFORMED OF THE BNP'S VIEWS. HOWEVER, BEGUM ZIA NOTED THAT UNLIKE SHEIKH HASINA WHO WAS IN PARLIAMENT, SHE HERSELF IS "LEADING A MOVEMENT" AND HAS BEEN FOR A LONG TIME. SHE IS NOT ABLE TO TAKE TIME OFF FOR A TRIP BECAUSE SHE HAS TO KEEP "LEADING THE PEOPLE." IN ANY CASE, BEGUM ZIA ASKED WHEN A GOOD TIME TO VISIT WOULD BE. GALBRAITH ENCOURAGED HER TO TRY TO MAKE A TRIP, AND SAID THAT THIS YEAR, THE BEST TIME WOULD BE IN SPRING OR EARLY SUMMER -- BEFORE THE PARTY CONVENTIONS AND THE CAMPAIGNING. HE SUGGESTED SHE COORDINATE WITH U.S. EMBASSY DHAKA ON THE TIMING OF A TRIP, IF SHE IS ABLE TO MAKE ONE.

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SHEIKH HASINA

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NEW DELHI FOR SENATE STAFFER GALBRAITH

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13. GALBRAITH AND POLCOUNS CALLED ON SHEIKH HASINA WAJED, PRESIDENT OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE, ON JANUARY 29.

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AMBASSADOR ARSHAD-UZ-ZAMAN, FORMER BDG AMBASSADOR TO THE OIC AND AWAMI LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY, WAS ALSO PRESENT. SHEIKH HASINA AND ZAMAN SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT THE JANUARY 24 CHITTAGONG INCIDENT (SEE REFTEL B). SHEIKH HASINA SAID THAT 70 PEOPLE HAD DIED AS A RESULT OF THE POLICE FIRING. SHE SAID THAT THE POLICE AIMED AT THE TRUCK SHE WAS IN. THE POLICE SHOT AT THE UPPER BODIES OF PEOPLE IN ORDER TO KILL, RATHER THAN AT LOWER EXTREMITIES TO DISABLE. ZAMAN SAID THE AWAMI LEAGUE CROWD WAS "GAY AND HAPPY;" THERE WAS "NO PROVOCATION." (COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT UNOFFICIALLY PUTS THE NUMBER OF DEAD AT ABOUT 30. OTHER SOURCES HAVE SAID THAT THERE WAS PROVOCATION; THAT THE AWAMI LEAGUE CROWD WAS "UNRULY" AND "ATTACKED" THE POLICE. THERE IS NO INDEPENDENT INFORMATION TO INDICATE THAT THE POLICE FIRING WAS EITHER PRE-PLANNED OR DIRECTED AT SHEIKH HASINA. END COMMENT.)

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14. IN A RECITATION OF ERSHAD'S MISDEEDS, SHEIKH HASINA FOCUSED ON THE FACT THAT HE HAD ALLOWED LT. COLONEL (RET'D) SAYED FAROOK RAHMAN AND LT. COLONEL (RET'D) ABDUR RASHID TO FORM THE FREEDOM PARTY. FAROOK HAD "EVEN RUN FOR PRESIDENT." SHE NOTED THAT BOTH RASHID AND FAROOK HAD RECENTLY BEEN TO THE U.S., SHE "DID NOT KNOW" FOR WHAT REASON. (POLCOUNS SAID THAT FAROOK HAD INTENDED TO LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF PURCHASING AN AIRPLANE.) SHEIKH HASINA BROUGHT OUT SEVERAL PHOTOGRAPHS SHOWING FAROOK, RASHID AND THEIR FOLLOWERS WITH GUNS. SHE CHARGED, AS SHE HAS CHARGED BEFORE, THE TWO MEN ARE INVOLVED IN SMUGGLING "GUNS AND DRUGS." SHEIKH HASINA ALSO TALKED ABOUT ERSHAD'S CORRUPTION, REFERRING TO THE "IMMORALITY" ASSOCIATED WITH HIS RELATIONS WITH HIS (ALLEGED) "SECOND WIFE" (MARIAM MUMTAZ).

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15. GALBRAITH SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO MEET SHEIKH HASINA. HER FATHER, SHEIKH MUJIB, HAD BEEN AN IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL PERSONAGE; HE WAS TRULY THE "FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY."

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16. GALBRAITH ASKED SHEIKH HASINA WHY SHE PARTICIPATED IN PARLIAMENT, IF THE 1986 ELECTIONS WERE AS FLAWED AS SHE CLAIMS. SHE SAID THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WERE INDEED FRAUDULENT. THE AWAMI LEAGUE ACTUALLY WON "226" SEATS. (COMMENT: THE AWAMI LEAGUE CAME OUT OF THE ELECTION WITH 76 SEATS. ONLY AWAMI LEAGUERS BELIEVE THEY ACTUALLY WON MORE. END COMMENT.) SHE NEVERTHELESS WENT INTO PARLIAMENT IN ORDER TO KEEP A "LITTLE BIT OF DEMOCRACY" WORKING. SHE SAID SHE WOULD NOT HAVE RESIGNED FROM PARLIAMENT, IN SPITE OF THE PRESSURE. ERSHAD HAD "NO REASON" TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT. (COMMENT: IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT ERSHAD DISSOLVED PARLIAMENT DECEMBER 6 TO PREEMPT AN EXPECTED AWAMI LEAGUE RESIGNATION. ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE SHEIKH HASINA TRULY DID NOT WANT TO RESIGN, WE ALSO THINK SHE COULD NOT HAVE WITHSTOOD FOR LONG THE PARTY PRESSURE TO RESIGN, WHEN THE JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI MP'S HAD ALREADY DONE SO. END COMMENT.)

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17. GALBRAITH ASKED WHAT COULD THE U.S. DO. SHEIKH HASINA SAID THAT THE U.S. SHOULD "MAKE ERSHAD RESIGN." SHE SAID THE "PEOPLE" BELIEVE THE U.S. IS KEEPING ERSHAD IN POWER; THAT U.S. AID IS GOING INTO HIS POCKETS. THE POLCOUNS EXPLAINED THAT U.S. ASSISTANCE GOES INTO PROGRAMS WHICH ARE VERY CAREFULLY MONITORED.

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18. SHEIKH HASINA SAID THAT BANGLADESH MUST BREAK THE  
CYCLE OF "MARTIAL LAW FOLLOWED BY A NEW POLITICAL  
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NEW DELHI FOR SENATE STAFFER GALBRAITH

CINCPAC FOR FPA

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PARTY FOLLOWED BY CIVILIAN DISTURBANCES FOLLOWED BY A  
NEW MARTIAL LAW." SHE SAID THAT "ALL THINKING PEOPLE"  
OF BANGLADESH AGREE THAT ERSHAD MUST GO. SHEIKH HASINA  
SAID THAT THE AWAMI LEAGUE WILL WIN ANY?"FAIR ELECTION".  
SHE CLAIMED THAT THE PEOPLE STILL HAVE TREMENDOUS LOVE  
FOR SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN, AND THAT THE AWAMI LEAGUE IS  
THE BEST ORGANIZED PARTY.

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19. GALBRAITH SAID IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL IF THE  
OPPOSITION COULD PUT FORTH A PLAN ABOUT HOW TO CONDUCT  
ELECTIONS, AND PRESENT SOME CONCRETE PROPOSALS ABOUT  
HOW TO MANAGE THE SITUATION IF ERSHAD WERE TO DEPART.  
SHEIKH HASINA RESPONDED BY INSISTING THAT "ERSHAD MUST  
GO; THE U.S. SHOULD MAKE HIM."

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20. GALBRAITH EXPLAINED THAT THE SITUATION IN THE  
PHILIPPINES WAS DIFFERENT; THE U.S. HAS CLOSE, LONG-  
STANDING TIES WITH THAT COUNTRY, AND IMPORTANT SECURITY  
INTERESTS THERE. THE TIES WITH BANGLADESH ARE NOT THE  
SAME. ALSO, THE PHILIPPINE PEOPLE MADE MARCOS GO. THEY  
INSERTED THEIR BODIES IN FRONT OF THE ARMY'S TANKS. THE  
PHILIPPINE OPPOSITION WAS ABLE TO SUBMERGE ITS DIFFER-  
ENCES AND UNITE; AFTER THE FRAUDULENT PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTION, MRS. AQUINO DECLARED HERSELF PRESIDENT.  
NOTHING SIMILAR HAS HAPPENED IN BANGLADESH.

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21. GALBRAITH SAID THAT U.S. INTEREST IN BANGLADESH  
IS HUMANITARIAN -- TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY  
DEVELOP ECONOMICALLY. HE SAID THE U.S. ALSO WANTS TO  
SEE THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. IN  
THIS REGARD, HE REFERRED TO REPRESENTATIVE SOLARZ'S  
DRAFT LANGUAGE REFERRING TO CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN  
A CREDIBLE ELECTORAL PROCESS, PARLIAMENT, A FREE PRESS,  
AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY, AND EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERN-  
MENT.

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22. SHEIKH HASINA'S LAST QUESTION WAS WHETHER THE U.S.  
WOULD ACCEPT AN AWAMI LEAGUE GOVERNMENT. GALBRAITH  
SAID "YES, OF COURSE." HE ADDED THAT THE U.S. WILL  
ACCEPT ANY GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH ELECTED BY THE  
PEOPLE IN A FAIR ELECTION.

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PRESS COVERAGE  
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23. BANGLADESH DAILIES REPORTED MATTER-OF-FACTLY  
THAT GALBRAITH HAD CALLED ON THE TWO LEADERS. THE  
FEBRUARY 2 ENGLISH-LANGUAGE "NEW NATION" CARRIED AN  
INTERVIEW WITH SHEIKH HASINA, DURING WHICH SHE WAS  
ASKED ABOUT HER MEETING WITH GALBRAITH. SHE SAID  
GALBRAITH HAD "STRESSED FIVE CONDITIONS FOR SMOOTH

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FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH," AND LISTED THE ITEMS FROM THE SOLARZ DRAFT LANGUAGE. SHE SAID SHE HAD DISCUSSED WITH GALBRAITH THE AWAMI LEAGUE "STAND ABOUT FREE AND FAIR POLLS." SHE ALSO SAID THAT GALBRAITH HAD "HIGHEST REGARD" FOR SHEIKH MUJIB, WHOM GALBRAITH COMPARED WITH "GEORGE WASHINGTON."

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COMMENT

24. GALBRAITH WAS NOT IMPRESSED. HE BELIEVED NEITHER WOMAN HAD HEARD WHAT HE HAD SAID. HE RECEIVED NO INDICATION EITHER OF THEM HAD ANY PLAN TO FOLLOW BEYOND TRYING TO GET RID OF ERSHAD, OR THAT EITHER OF THEM HAD A PROGRAM FOR GOVERNING. IT WAS, NEVERTHE- LESS, IMPORTANT THAT HE SEE THE TWO LEADERS. PERHAPS THERE IS A SMALL CHANCE THESE TWO MEETINGS WILL  
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NEW DELHI FOR SENATE STAFFER GALBRAITH

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MITIGATE SOMEWHAT THE PERCEPTION THAT THE U.S. IS SUPPORTING PRESIDENT ERSHAD AGAINST THE OPPOSITION.  
END COMMENT. DE PREE  
END OF MESSAGE

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